

REMARKS

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.111, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the claim rejections set forth in the Office Action dated October 17, 2006.

Summary

Claims 1, 3 – 7, 9, and 14 – 18 are allowed.

Claims 1, 4 – 7, 12, and 15 – 18 are currently amended.

Claims 3 and 14 were cancelled.

Claims 1, 4 – 7, 9, 11 – 12, and 15 – 18 are currently pending.

Claim Objections

Claims 3 and 5 – 7 were objected to because of minor informalities. Applicants have amended claims 4 – 7 and 15 – 18 to properly depend on the respective independent claim. Therefore, claims 3 and 5 – 7 are in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

“Claims 3 – 7 and 14 – 18 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims” (Office action dated October 17, 2006).

Claims Rejections

Claims 1, 9, 11, and 12 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Umemoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,366,409).

Independent claim 1 is amended to incorporate the features of allowable claim 3. Claim 3 is cancelled. Therefore, claim 1 is allowable over the cited references for at least the same reasons that previous claim 3 was allowable. Dependent claims 9 and 11 depend from allowable claim 1, so are allowable for at least this reason.

Independent claim 12 is amended to incorporate the features of allowable claim 14. Claim 14 is cancelled. Therefore, claim 12 is allowable over the cited references for at least the same reasons that previous claim 14 was allowable.

CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons presented above, the Applicant respectfully submits that the pending claims are in condition for allowance.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned in the event that a telephone interview would expedite consideration of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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